The U.S. Army School of Music Presents

A Guide for the Blue Collar Band Director

Some Original (A Few) and Stolen (Most of Them) Concepts for Band Conductors

A musician calls to see what time rehearsal is that night. The person on the phone says, "There's no rehearsal, the conductor died." He hangs up, hits re-dial, and asks when rehearsal is. They say, "There's no rehearsal, the conductor died." He does this four more times and the person on the phone asks why he keeps calling because after all, the conductor is dead. His reply is "I know - I just like hearing you say it."

Introduction

The most important thing the conductor must always remember is that no conductor has ever made any music; the musicians make the music - the conductor's job is to empower the musicians, to put them in situations where their very best musicality can be revealed. You cannot cause them to be better than they are – you can only bring out something in them that maybe they didn't know they had. You absolutely can make them worse than they are. The bottom line rule for a conductor is a variation on the Hippocratic Oath: "First, do no harm." If your stick technique is limited, just make sure you don't get in their way or screw them up. If they are playing great, minimize your interference. If they aren't playing great, figure out what they need from you.

Disclaimer: The following are the opinions of the author (and probably no one else). They do not constitute Army band doctrine. Also, these observations and suggestions largely apply to adult bands or more advanced bands of younger musicians such as I am privileged to work with. Some of these suggestions may not be applicable to younger bands.

NOTE: This "living" article was last updated on 5 May 2007. It's a "living" article because after nearly every rehearsal, performance, conversation with a colleague, or reading, I find myself adding or revised items. Erich Leinsdorf in his wonderful book (that was recommended to me by a colleague), The Composer's Advocate, wrote, "….the contemporary artist….. remains a student all his life or else ceases to be a true artist." The latest version of this can always be found at http://bands.army.mil. That site, "Army Bands Online," has a wealth of information about U.S. Army Bands and includes a "Masterclass Online" section where articles by some of the finest musicians in the world can be found.

1. Balance. The terms balance and blend are used often but without much understanding of the desired effect or end state. When we say, “fix the balance”, what we really mean is “let me hear what I’m supposed to hear.” In that regard, what I think we really mean when we talk about balance is clarity. Bands in general tend to be a mish-mash of sound colors – if described in terms of visual art it would be a huge smear of colors resulting in --- brown. A fine orchestra has a clear “palette” to work with. It has a canvas of homogenous string sound with very distinct soloistic wind colors. In order to achieve such clarity, I find it helpful to use terminology I stole from James Barnes – the musicians should always know who’s in the foreground, midground, and background. That easily understood concept will quickly fix most “balance” problems and enable the right things to be heard in the right place and in the right prominence on the musical “canvas.” The next step is for a lead voice or lead color to be designated within each of the groups (foreground, midground, background). The lead voice or lead color will set the character or timbre for the group – and this implies they will need to listen for that lead voice, thereby adjusting the balance within that group (foreground, midground, background). Proper adjustments of the “focus” will result in the true goal – clarity – the ability to clearly hear what needs to be heard by arranging the foreground, midground, and background and additionally by deciding what color(s) should predominate. The selection you make of what instrument is the lead voice allows further clarity by either maximizing or minimizing the contrast between the groups. Let’s say you want to be able to hear the trumpets in the “foreground” without them having to play really loud. If we assume the background is the “pad” in the low winds, and the midground is a countermelody in the upper woodwinds. By making the tuba/euphonium conical sound the lead color in the background and making the piccolo the lead voice in the midground, the foreground is open for the trumpets to play (without overplaying) with a nice fat sound. The background voices (which may include saxes, bassoons, and trombones) will strive for a dark sound if they emulate the tubas/euphoniums. The woodwinds which may include flutes, clarinets, and oboes will work toward a crystalline sound (not just bright, but also thin, or more accurately, tightly focused) if they emulate the piccolo, thereby clearing out the timbre landscape and allowing the foreground to “jump off the canvas” without forcing the sound.

2. Rhythmic clarity. In case you missed it, clarity is essential and nothing muddies the sonic waters more than a lack of rhythmic clarity. “Keeping time” is the musicians’ job, not the conductor’s. The only way this can be done is by a high level of concentration on what I call the rhythmic stream – the mental “Dr. Beat” of the subdivided beat that must be clicking away in every musician’s head. I was blessed to play for Ray Shiner (a former member of the Sauter-Finnegan Orchestra) in college. He ran sectionals by having the section play a slow ballad without tapping their feet, nodding heads, or any other gesture. He’d start the metronome then turn its sound off and say, “begin.” At the end of the chart (rests included), if we weren’t still with the blinking light on the metronome (that only he could see) he’d say “again.” We quickly learned to subdivide and concentrate like crazy to avoid being there all night. As a result, the band swung effortlessly in every style because the musicians kept time, not the director or the drummer. I routinely look for opportunities for the band to work without conductor and force them to listen to the ensemble’s internal pulse. David Holsinger’s wonderful

"Hymnsong on a Theme by Philip Bliss" is a great chart for this. It has eighth notes snaking throughout the entire piece. By making the musicians really lock in on the eighth notes and stressing to the players to make them precise, you will force the band to listen and concentrate. The effect we want is like the proverbial duck, gliding on the surface and paddling like crazy underwater. The melody can only truly soar only if the players have that rhythmic stream clicking away in their heads. The result then, is a vertical rhythmic precision that results in clarity, liberating you and the musicians to vary the tempo as needed in a cohesive rather than a disjointed manner.

3. Articulations. I find that the best way to describe articulations for wind players is by visualizing string bowings. The visual/mechanical aspect of bowings is easy to grasp if the players have ever watched an orchestra live or on television. The sound produced by the various bowing techniques is easily transferred to a discussion of sound production in wind music.

Visualize String Bowings to Achieve Good Wind Articulations

A down or up bow, about ½ of the bow length. Defined by string players as *Détaché.*

A down bow with attitude. String players call this *Accented Détaché* and think of this as being in any direction. Wind players should think of this as a strong down bow to get the right image of a full value note with attitude at the beginning.

Think "full bow." Same as the regular quarter note in length but using full bow gives the note more "glow." The old definition of "full value" is wrong. The tenuto indicates emphasis and "ring" to the note.

Think pizzicato. If the wind player thinks about a violinist high up on the fingerboard doing a pizzicato (think "plink") they will give it the right length. Wind players normally play staccato too long.

A hammered note. Think of a string player starting with the bow off the string and then hammering it down. This will help the wind player visualize the violent nature of this attack and the marcato style.

Wind players are often lazy and a bit indiscriminate with their articulations. Often, woodwinds play everything too legato just as many brass players tend to accent everything and frequently all are a bit careless about note length. Overemphasize articulations and don't let your ears accept the natural tendencies of the players. Think of it like public speaking. A great public speaker will actually over-annunciate but to the listener it will be natural sounding. Unless the musicians do the same thing – seemingly go overboard in differentiating articulations, they'll sound like they're talking in a monotone with marbles in their mouths. Try it --- when the articulations are really played, the music will jump off the page.

4. Warm-ups. Unless dealing with a young group or perhaps a less skilled adult group, don't waste your time with group warm-ups. Each musician should know what he or she needs to do to warm-up: one size does not fit all. Give them some time to warm-up but make it brutally clear that when the tuning starts at "the appointed hour" they must be ready. The warm-up time is not smoke break time; it is a courtesy given to a professional musician with an expectation of wise use.

5. Tuning. It doesn't really matter that much what pitch you use as long as the pitch source is 100% consistent every time. Good intonation can't be achieved if you tune to A=440 one time and A=444 the next. Many bands tune to the tubas. In a perfect world that makes great theoretical sense. However, when was the last time you heard an orchestra tune to the string bass? Tubas are maddeningly difficult to sustain a perfectly centered precise pitch source on (I'm a tuba player), and we all know that a variation of one cent (hundredth of a semi-tone) by the tuba can cause those tuning to the overtones to shift up to 8 cents. The richness of the tuba's overtones actually makes it harder (in the real, not the theoretical world) to hear the pitch center. Use a clarinet or oboe player who is using an electronic tuner to ensure they always give the same pitch. Lock it dead on A=440 every single time and then tune to B-flat (again, only in my opinion because most of the instruments in a band are pitched in B-flat). It's quite true that some woodwind instruments tune more accurately to an "A" however I find that when most bands tune to multiple notes they never really settle in to a common pitch center. Another essential is ensuring the musicians really hear and tune to the correct pitch source, not to the person playing the loudest (usually a trumpet player tuned sharp). The only way I know to internalize the pitch source in each musician's head is to have them sing the pitch (in tune) before trying to tune the horns. As you go through the rehearsal, you may wish to tune the tonic of the piece to help continue "tightening the shot group" (a military weapons range term referring to getting closer and closer to grouping the shots into a perfect bull's-eye) and to help educate less experienced players about their horn's tendencies. You can sound the pitch from your tuning source, locked in with the tuner, have the band sing it to get it into their heads, and then match what they sang with the instruments. This takes under one minute and will be every bit as effective as tuning individual sections, playing chord scales, etc. I find it helpful to give separate pitches for low brass, high brass, and woodwinds, rather than having the whole band trying to tune at once during the initial tuning. If the brass players are honking away on some variation of the true pitch, the woodwinds usually just give up. Regarding playing chord scales (starting a major scale in three staggered groups so that it's a series of triads), or other group tuning or warm-up exercises, do it if you want to but I think it's often a waste of time and don't <u>ever</u> do it in front of an audience. It may have some utility with a younger band but adult bands should be treated like adults. Again – I've never heard a professional orchestra play chord scales or any other group tuning exercise (although I've heard some that could have benefited from <u>some</u> tuning).

6. Dynamics. The ensemble needs an "anchor" – a dynamic level that they can readily feel and go back to for a reference. I think the best one is *forte* once they know the definition is "strong, but not loud." Get a good solid, strong chord that all of them agree is ***f***. Then work down from there, getting agreement of what each of the dynamic levels "feels" like. When things get out of control (usually too loud) go back and establish the reference point of ***f*** again. If they can always say, "this is what ***f*** feels like it'll quickly let them see that their ***mp, mf, p***, etc. are way too loud. Don't bother practicing ***ff***; getting bands to play loud is never a problem.

7. Crescendo. Get them to define it as "start soft" and you'll fix 90% of all crescendos. If they can drop down a dynamic level at the beginning of the crescendo, the growth in volume will take care of itself. The next step is to gauge the length of the crescendo. If it goes from ***p*** to ***ff*** in 8 bars, I'll often have them write in the "milestones" (***mp, mf, f)*** at specific points throughout the crescendo, otherwise it'll be at ***ff*** in the second bar.

8. Accel. And Rit. and their various cousins. GRADUAL is what you need to remember. *Ritardando* does <u>not</u> mean *subito meno mosso*. *Accelerando*. does <u>not</u> mean *subito piu mosso*. Again, look at the time duration and ensure that the rit. or accel. goes from beginning to end and isn't frontloaded at the beginning.

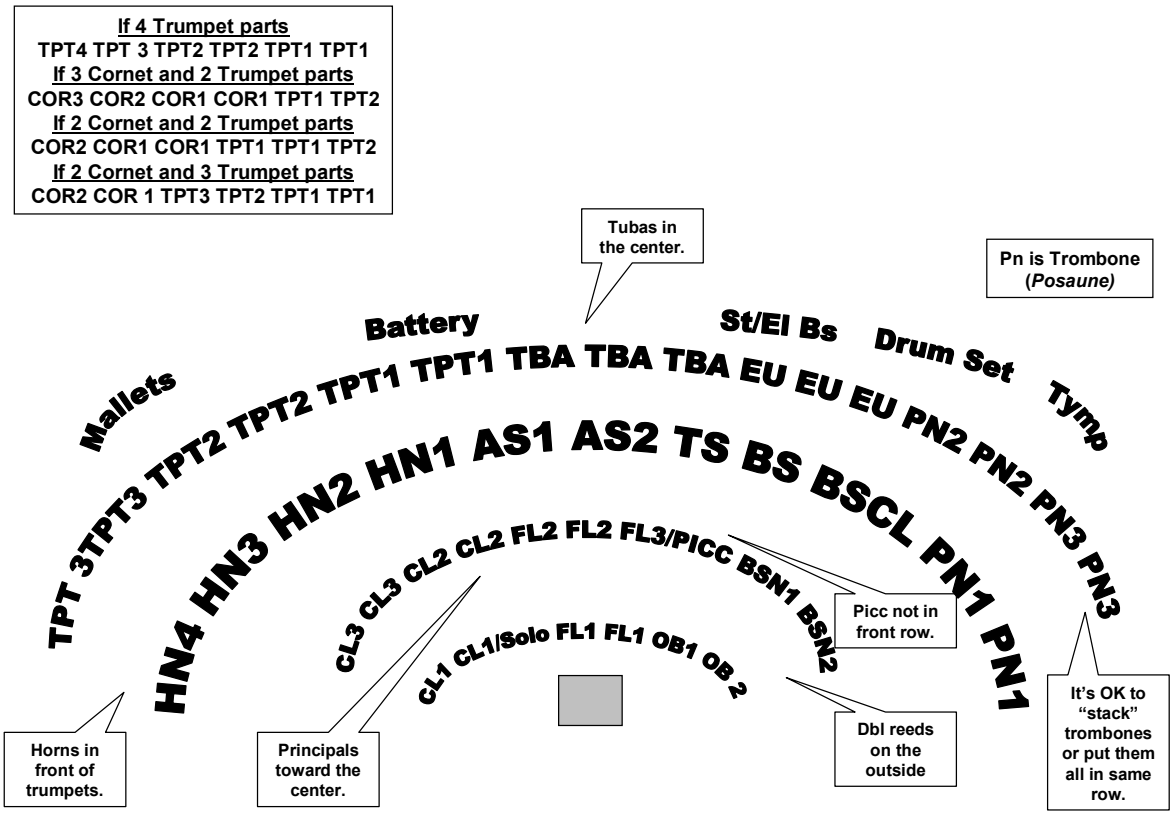
9. Your stance. This is a real weakness of mine – I tend to roam too much. Tony Maiello (who was my 5th grade band director, then my college band director, and remains a true mentor today) is the best I've seen at establishing a strong and well-balanced stance. Place your feet shoulder-width apart and move the feet <u>very</u> sparingly and only when done for a purpose. The whole point is to establish and keep stability and it will definitely make you a more effective (or at least less distracting) conductor. I was conducting Dvorak once in the home of the Prague Philharmonic (a humbling experience if there ever was one), and I got so "into it" I almost fell off the podium on the last note. Besides scaring the daylights out of me I'm sure it caused the band to pull back a bit as well – a terrible thing to have my shortcomings impact the music negatively. Every movement that you make that doesn't enhance the music is a negative one (refer to The Rule – *Do No Harm*). Conductors are an important part of the visual experience for the audience. We help them see where to listen and must always reflect the music. The instant the conductor becomes distracting by lurching around the podium, he's hurting the music. When I watch tapes of myself and see my too-frequent shifting of feet, I realize how distracting it is to the audience to see me shuffling around (if only I could nail my shoes to the podium and walk out in my socks). It's just one more item on the list of things I've got to work on. The idea of the conductor as a potential physical distracter to the music also relates to posture. While the conductor must not be stiff or unnatural, rhythmic bobbing of the knees or bending at the waist adds nothing to the music, doesn't help the band, and can be quite distracting to the audience.

10. Set-up of the band. There are many, many variations and no one right solution. However, I think there are some common principles that should be applied that result in the type of sound that I want from a band. It all comes from thinking about the sonic

characteristics of each instrument as well as their role in the band. Here are a few things that have always worked for me:

- Double reeds. The oboe and bassoon are the only colors in the concert band that are not in most marching bands, so they need to be heard. Their sound does not come from the bell; it comes out of the tone holes. If you put your bassoon in the middle of the band you might as well use it for firewood. The oboe sound in direct fire mode can be distracting to an audience. Accordingly, put the oboes to the conductor's side (I prefer right) on the outside with bassoons right behind them.
- In a typical military band there are only two or three flutes. If there are three, I like to put two in the front row and the piccolo in the second row. The piccolo will always be heard and indeed, is often too loud and piccolo is very tough to tune. By putting the piccolo in the middle of a few folks their tuning frame of reference will improve. Piccolo players hate this, wanting to be in the front row, but it does save them from spending every rehearsal with a hand in their face. It also saves the conductor from high range hearing loss.
- Put the tubas in the center. I'm a tuba player and the old "the sound gets lost in the rafters" excuse doesn't work. Putting the tubas on the flank with their bells pointed at the audience will not give a blended sound and the band needs to hear the chord fundamental. Put them in the middle, period. If there are curtains up there, tell them to play louder.
- Put the horns in front of the trumpets/cornets. I want my trumpets to play with a darker sound and having them hear that horn quality will help achieve that. Also, we often criticize the trumpets for being out of tune but then have them sit where all they can hear is snare drum. Put the tubas on their left (the tonic), the horns in front of them (the chord), and they will play better in tune and with a more rounded sound quality.
- Put principal players toward the center. This really bothers a lot of principal players who are used to sitting on the outside of the row. I feel that by putting each section arranged with the principal players toward the center it improves their ability to hear each other and results in a more cohesive sound for the band.
- Pack the band in tight. An American band will expand to fit as much space as you give them. Each musician will bring a lawn chair, a cooler, a sleeping bag, four instrument cases, and 8 bottles of water to rehearsal (but will forget to bring a mute or their music). I've seen a 20 piece band "cram" itself into a 45'x35' space. Insist that the band sit almost uncomfortably close together. The really great British brass bands sit with their elbows touching so they can feel each other breathe. I like to set up the band myself or to put out some "limits" at the perimeter to keep them packed in. They can't/won't listen to each other if they're too far away.
- Here's how a sample concert band might look:

Sample CB Set-up



11. Cornets. What a shame that so few bands use them! If you can, use cornets whenever the music calls for them. Some trumpet players will fight you tooth and nail. It forces them to learn two very different horns requiring different techniques, but the payoff is well worth it. The cornet has sound that "spreads" as it leaves the horn and it can add pastels to the palette of colors. A well-written transcription, like the glorious Hindsley transcriptions, will be very careful to use trumpets and cornets correctly. A section with cornets and trumpets is the only way to properly play a transcription. The trumpets should play like orchestral trumpets (adding vivid primary colors), allowing the cornets to do the violin parts justice. If you have good quality horns, make your trumpets use cornets – just check your car for explosives until the trumpet players grow to appreciate how much better the band sounds.

12. Reference books. The Elizabeth Green text, The Modern Conductor, remains the gold standard for conducting primers. When I start to feel my conducting is getting lame (usually after every rehearsal or concert), I go back and scan it, get embarrassed at how sloppy I've gotten, and spend some mirror time reviewing the patterns and practicing some "wax on, wax off" moves with both hands. Erich Leinsdorf's book, The Composer's Advocate is a terrific text that discusses the conductor's obligation to divine the composer's intent. While much of the book requires the reader to have at hand many orchestral scores in order to fully follow the text, there is a wonderful "Top Ten"

list (p. 175-178 in the paperback version) that should be required reading for all conductors. The paragraph headings are:

1. *Be prepared.*
2. *Work with the librarian.*
3. *Plan rehearsal time.*
4. *Speak little.*
5. *Stop seldom.*
6. *Do not keep musicians idle.*
7. *Stand to conduct.*
8. *Understand players and their parts.*
9. *Do not fake.*
10. *Do not delude yourself.*

When it comes to texts about conducting, score preparation, or music in general, almost none are "bad." In other words, any time the conductor is thinking and studying about his or her art, it's a good thing. Texts with "dubious" approaches can be helpful in helping you to decide what (and why) the path you've chosen is right for you. In private lessons, rehearsals, and clinics with Tony Maiello, Jack Stamp, Elliott Delborgo, Harry Begian, Greg Prudom, and many other terrific bandmasters, one measuring stick was always constant. The conductor is doing it "right" if he or she has enabled the musicians to do justice to the music.

13. Preparing the Score. When I was a new Army Band Officer I attended a National Band Association convention at Northwestern University. One of the clinics was on score prep by one of the top university directors. He said we had to: (1) do a complete harmonic and formal analysis of the score, (2) memorize the score completely, (3) play it on the piano, (4) and play every part on each of the instruments. I was driving back to the hotel contemplating a career in the insurance industry when someone waved to me for a ride. I pulled over and Francis McBeth jumped in the car. I was trying to not show how flabbergasted I was to get to meet him when he asked what I thought of that class. I told him I couldn't do all of that even if I had the time and maybe I needed to reconsider my career choice. He said his approach to score prep was to, "find the meter changes before I get on the podium……and that's for the stuff I wrote." Obviously, he was speaking somewhat in jest but he understood that sometimes a conductor only has time to navigate the major landmarks. There are lots of theories and books on how to prepare scores but I guess I'd advise you to start with the basics enabling you to navigate the score without disaster. Go as far toward the other extreme as you have time for. The best score preparation teacher I ever had was Chief Warrant Officer Greg Prudom. Before each of my rehearsals he would open the score to a random page and start counting down from ten. By the time he got to one I had to have told him what the rehearsal problems for that page were and how I would help the band fix them. <u>That</u> is your goal for score prep. Know what you want it to sound like and why, figure out where you think the band will need help, and know how you're going to help.

14. Note and phrase shaping and how your score prep can help you know how to approach them. Recently a colleague asked me to expand on this topic. In earlier

versions, it was pretty short and to the point, saying that phrase shaping was closely related to note shaping and both can generally be determined by answering one question – what's its purpose?

- Does the note begin a statement? Does the phrase begin a section?
- Does the note end a statement? Does the phrase end a section?
- Is it supposed to push the music forward or pull it back?
- What else is going on? If it's a note "has a whole in the middle" (half note or longer) is there movement going on in another voice while it's sustaining? If a phrase is in repose, is there some underlying movement to be revealed?

These are the questions I ask myself in determining how a note or a phrase should be shaped, but in fact, there's additional insight you need prior to answering those questions. It may be helpful to think of this whole topic area in terms of the little Russian dolls that nest inside each other. To make musically sound decisions, work from very large to very small.

First comes an understanding of the composer's intent. Is the music programmatic? What emotions, thoughts, or sensations do you think the composer wants to convey to the listener? Sometimes this understanding will come from a little research. Sometimes it only comes after you're worked on the piece a while. This may sound painfully obvious, but see if the composer has written a paragraph about the piece in the score. Often, we're so anxious to find the meter changes we don't take the time to read the composer or arranger notes.

Once you have a little intuition into the composer's intent (in the military we call it the "end state"), then look at the big shape of the piece. Some would call this the formal analysis phase, but for most of us that's a pretty intimidating term, bringing flashbacks of multiple colored pencils and charts with odd shapes all guaranteed to suck the joy out of any piece of music. While a detailed formal analysis is great, it's not always necessary to find every retrograde inversion in order to make good music and besides, the "blue collar band director" almost never has the time for it. Most important is taking a step back to see the big overall shape of the piece. It's a lot less important that you know whether it's in a double rondo form than if you know it's "Fast-Slow-Sort of Fast-Slower-Really Fast " or something like that. In addition to phrasing (the supposed topic of this paragraph, understanding the big shape will really help you get the tempo relationships right. The parts of this big shape equate to the chapters in a book. When you've got a feel for the "chapter titles" you can then look for the paragraphs. These may be various themes or stylistically distinct parts of the "chapters." At this point, because you now have a feel for the general construction and where everything is heading (and for what purpose), how to shape phrases will start to appear pretty obvious – just look for the role of the phrase (the sentence in our musical book):

- Major statement? If so, does it end with a period, a question mark, or an exclamation point?
- Transition? Does it serve as a point of repose, as a gradual change in style, to push the listener forward, or to pull them back?

- Destination? If so, where's it heading and what should the listener feel like when they get there?

Answering questions like that should make it clear how the phrase should be shaped. Here's where too many conductors get bogged down in worrying if they have found the "right" answer. This is where it's better to just think like a musician (which we all used to be before becoming conductors). Any decent musician who sings a phrase having gained the insight of the "book" (composition), its "chapters" (big parts of the form), and its "paragraphs" (themes and smaller sections), will have no problem knowing how to shape the "sentence" (phrase). Simple descriptions (ex. build for four bars, peak here, taper to the end) will quickly convey your intent and the musicians will know exactly what you want.

Aside: Regarding talking to the band, when I was at The U.S. Army Band, one of the musicians told me: "The conductors we like are the ones who only know four words: 'Louder, Softer, Faster, Slower.' Save the descriptions of your navel gazing for the bus ride."

Now, you're really into the fun stuff because many phrases are in fact shaped by the nuances given to each note and often the most important note shape to consider is the last one in the phrase. Some of a few possibilities are:

- Taper the note to lead to a moment of repose?
- Crescendo into a sharp cutoff?
- "Sniff" breath that pulls the listener quickly into the next thought?

The next most important note is the "fulcrum" of the phrase – the note that is the focus. This is often the climax note but might also be the note of greatest repose. The third most important note to shape is the first note of the phrase.

The result of this is of course absolutely not for you to be the expert on the shape of every note and phrase, but to help develop an awareness in the musicians so they start thinking about what the notes they are playing need to do within a phrase and what role the phrase plays in the form. They can then habitually do the "right" thing (which they'll usually do anyway if you don't interfere with them) and then you only have to consider those cases where the composer's intent might call for something other than what they are doing. This idea of getting the musicians to always be sensing and thinking of how they fit into what the band's doing is the ultimate goal of the "blue collar band director." Easy to say, but hard to do, and well worth the effort.

15. Marking the score.
    - If you don't need it marked, don't mark it. If the score text is clear and easy to read, just read it.
    - Only mark the cues that you're likely to miss if they aren't marked and after you stop missing them erase the marking.
    - Use "Pn" for trombones (*Posaune*). Otherwise, there are too many brass instruments starting with a "T."

- DO NOT use the line above the piccolo part for your markings like many do. This will result in your just reading the top line markings, not the music.
- Don't use colored pencil. It never erases properly and the next guy will curse you. Also, I find as I learn a score more, I want to reduce the number of markings. If I mark something in red and later decide it's not that important, that score's ruined forever – the red will draw your eyes like a moth to the flame.
- For thick places where I think the band might need me to tell them who's in the Foreground, Midground, and Background and who the Lead Voice is, I'll put FG, MG, BG, and LV so I don't have to burn podium time remembering what I wanted there.
- Some small brackets with a number at the start at the top of the score can be occasionally used to help see the phrases. That can also help free your eyes from the score. If I've got an 8 bar phrase coming and I see: "I- 8 -I" it can help me to quickly recognize the phrasal shape and also helps get my eyes out of the score. Just don't let this technique turn into a crutch where you are "conducting by the numbers."

16. Practicing conducting. There are those who say baton technique is irrelevant and at the opposite end there are those who seem to believe that a beautiful stick is everything in conducting. As with most things, the truth is somewhere in the middle. No superb musician would discount the importance of being able to play scales, rudiments, or whatever may be the fundamental muscle memory requirements for their instrument. Similarly, even the most amazing musician standing on a podium needs the basic repertoire of commonly accepted conducting gestures in order to communicate efficiently with the ensemble. Maybe "floor, wall, wall, ceiling" is not always the most musical way to conduct 4/4, but it's a good place to start. The conductor has to have all of the basic techniques and gestures well mastered in order to convey their musical insight. However, never let the technique become more important than knowing the music and knowing your instrument (the ensemble). Think of it as a three-legged stool with the legs being: conducting technique, knowledge/insight into the music, and skill working with the ensemble. If any one of the three is missing, the stool will topple. In my opinion, if time keeps you from having all three legs of equal "length," ensure knowledge/insight into the music is the "longest" leg and work to balance the stool as quickly as you can. Regarding the conducting technique basics, if you can stand in front of a mirror and do very clear and properly shaped legato and marcato 4, 3, and 2 patterns while indicating crescendo and then decrescendo with the left hand, and then adding prepared left hand (and eye) cues on each of those beats consistently, you have 90% of the physical tools you'll need to be a good conductor. Don't waste time on your 11/8 pattern until you can do those things superbly and without having to think about the gestures; if you can do them well, you'll be in the top 10% of conductors anyway. To reiterate, if you have limited hours to do score prep and conducting practice – learn the music. Pretty moves without knowing what you're trying to convey to the musicians are just…… pretty moves. The musicians don't watch us that much anyway. However, ensure you can consistently do those things listed above – they are the equivalents of the screwdriver, pliers, crescent wrench, and hammer in your conducting toolkit; and then get your head into the music. Constantly put yourself in the musician's seat so that

you are always viewing your conducting in light of "what do they need from me to really play the music?" If you do that honestly, you'll also probably do less irrelevant "time beating." If there are no tempo changes and the band is pretty tight, your gestures are better used in other places like phrasing and style. If the band's playing great it's alright to just stand there and let the audience concentrate on the band and the music instead of your windmilling. As a side note, if you've got something in "1", see if it would be clearer conducted in supermetrics (a practice stolen from Jim Curnow, by the way). That is, if the measures of "1" are in groups of four, conduct a four pattern. Beating one doesn't let you express much in terms of style – it's really just flogging. It's also easy for the musicians to get lost because they see nothing but lots of downbeats. If something's in groups of 8 and you are conducting in 4 (each beat being a measure) those who are counting measures will thank you and it will let them all see and feel the phrases better. It will also help keep you from getting lost – always a plus for a conductor.

17. Pacing of the rehearsal.
    - You must have a lesson plan! You've absolutely got to have a detailed timeline going in of what you're going to do and for how long. I provide that detailed plan to the musicians at least 24 hours in advance. That does several things: (1) If they aren't going to be there, this will prompt them to let you know before the rehearsal so you can adjust fire if needed. (2) This tells the musicians you're prepared for the rehearsal so they had better be as well. They will have no excuse for being unprepared, not having their music, having the wrong horn, and all of the other hundred things that can ruin the flow of a rehearsal. (3) This forces the conductor to do his or her job ahead of time. If my boss wants to yell at me for the hour before the rehearsal and that was my scheduled "prep time" the rehearsal's a waste of time for everyone.
    - Musicians want to play. Unless stopping them will have value added, let them play. The responsibility to diagnose and fix things belongs to them, but sometimes they need two times through to do that. Elliott Delborgo, my former teacher and a real inspiration to me, when asked how he works all-state bands said if he has a one hour program and eight hours to rehearse, he plays through the program eight times. Very seldom does a conductor utter an epiphany so mind-blowing that it's more useful than letting the musicians play. Our comments must be surgically placed in the gaps when they are resting.
    - Use "post-its." I'll put 10 little yellow post-its on the side of my stand. As I hear something I want to fix, I stick it on that place in the score. When all 10 are gone, it's really fast to go straight to the spot. Nothing's worse than sitting in a band while the conductor searches for the place he heard something 40 measures ago. Go straight to the post-it, address the issue and put the post-it back on the side of the stand. The beauty of this? If the band's playing well, stops will be less frequent. If it's a train wreck, you'll stop sooner – the exact pacing you want anyway. This is also a stolen idea but I don't even know who I stole it from – some trombonist said he saw somebody do it and so it became my original idea.
    - Develop the habit of always telling them where to start the same way: "Count with me before letter B; 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 measures." Too many conductors say "let's

start 10, 11, 12, uh, 13 before B." While you're counting measures from a point that they don't know, they're daydreaming. Then, when you reveal the secret of where you're counting from, they've forgotten how many measures and whether it's before or after. If you use the recommended way, as soon as all of you have counted the measures together you're ready to start without delay (and don't delay, make the band keep up the pace of the rehearsal as well).

- Always strive to keep the rehearsal at a fast pace – work the band hard and fast and with a purpose. Then, between pieces give them a few minutes to relax, stretch, talk, and have some "band time." That couple of minutes of complete "time off" will refresh you and the band and get all of you ready to dive back in.

18. Know yourself. Be aware of your strengths and your weaknesses.
    - Know what your body looks like to others. This only comes through watching a video of yourself (painful) or having your spouse tell you what a spaz you look like on stage. My fingers are quite long so I'm really careful to keep my left hand fingers together or else the hand looks like a giant squid.
    - Know what your face looks like when you're conducting. Tony Maiello's terrific at using facial expressions to engage the band. My eyes are kind of "hooded" so I work on opening my eyes really large before going on stage, something my wife nagged (I mean, lovingly suggested) me into doing. Make sure your spouse tells you (like you can stop him/her) about any other distractions, like "panty-lines." I want the audience watching the band, not noticing that my boxers are bunched up. While on the topic of distractions, take your wristwatch off.
    - Don't be embarrassed to use a metronome. If you have a tendency to get "wound up," use a metronome to help you establish the correct tempo. This is especially important when conducting for a soloist. If the soloist tells me they want it at 144, I owe it to them to deliver 144, not 152 or 136. I'd rather be criticized for having a metronome as a crutch for a starting tempo than screw up the music or embarrass a soloist.

19. Work on sensing the band's state of mind. This does not necessarily mean worrying about pleasing them or making them happy. However, the effective musical leader will be able to sense when they can be pushed hard and will respond positively, and when a lighter touch should be used. Sometimes it just "isn't happening." That's when the conductor's leadership skills are most needed to know how to get it to start "happening." There are several ways of getting at this and only your knowledge of yourself and your band can guide you through this minefield.

    - Sometimes the best thing for a rehearsal with a "bad vibe" is to call it a day. This depends on how much rehearsal time you have available and must be used very sparingly. A band can't be led to believe that if they play with poor effort or results that you'll give up and give them time off.

    - A band with a good work ethic and a good rapport with the conductor will usually respond to an honest appraisal and an appeal to their artistic integrity. "Band, we're off to a pretty bad start today, how about if all of us take a ten minute

break and come back ready and refocused to play up to our potential?" A good band will appreciate the honesty and will usually snap out of it. This approach is almost always preferable to chewing them out. While a butt-chewing can sometimes cause an immediate increase in attentiveness, it rarely helps in the long run and can't be used very frequently. People who resent you won't make music with you.

- Try making some unusual tempo changes, forcing them to watch more closely and by extension to listen to each other. This can facilitate better and more cooperative playing and more active engagement in the rehearsal. This idea was stolen from one of my officer conducting students and is now therefore claimed as "mine."

- The same officer used the technique of having the band start a note together without verbal cue and with all eyes closed to focus the musicians on each other and the ensemble's "impulse of will." This truly (once again) reinforces the musicians' importance in (and responsibility for) musical performance and good ensemble.

20. Know how to bow and practice it! Colonel (Retired) Eugene W. Allen was the most masterful on-stage presence I've ever seen. When in his prime as Commander of The Army Band he looked commanding and yet relaxed and he spent many hours drilling me on how to bow, gesture, walk, and talk on stage. I don't know which one of us it was more painful for but it sure helped.

- Bowing. Bend slowly from the waist, head down, arms hanging freely and with fingers curled naturally, and say "look at my shoes, 2, 3, 4, and up." Avoid the most frequent variations (sorry for the use of stereotypes, no offense intended):
    * The Geisha. Half bow from the waist and looking up at the audience.
    * The French waiter. One arm horizontal across the waist.
    * The Drinking Bird. Arms tight by the side, bobbing up and down.

- When gesturing to the band, swing your arm slowly from the shoulder, fingers together, thumb parallel to the fingers and say "swing the gate slowly," (I really do say these things to keep my movements from getting too jerky – it helps me look less like a kid who's had too much sugar).

- When speaking, talk slowly and look at the audience. If there's a podium, I like to stand behind it and grip the sides – if I'm having an adrenaline rush I don't want that excitement to come across to the audience as nervousness and holding on to something helps me steady myself.

- Smile. If you look like you're happy to be there, the musicians and the audience will as well.

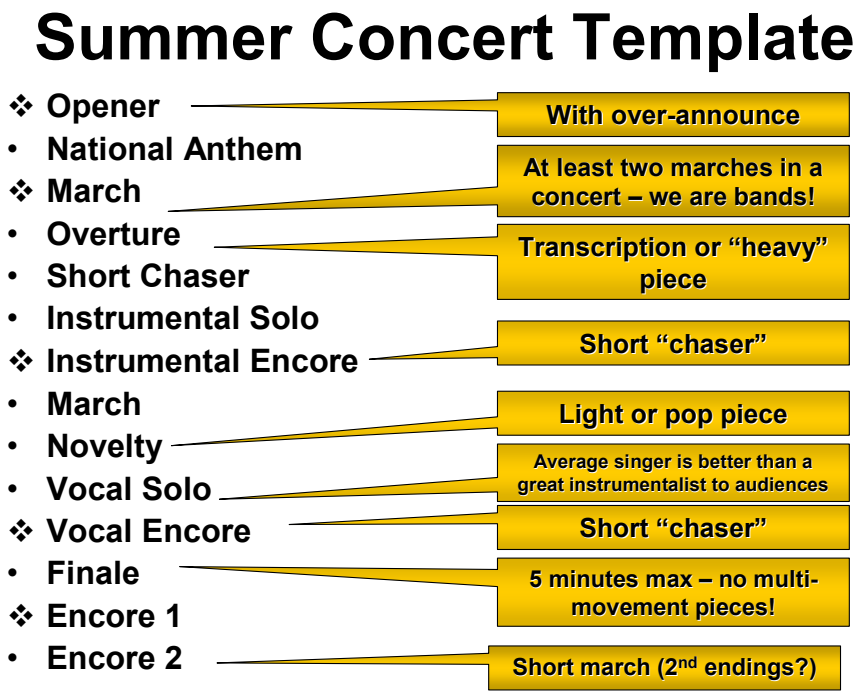
- Practice the curtain calls, bows, etc. with the band. Nothing ruins a terrific concert more than when it looks like a bunch of amateurs or Keystone Cops at the end.

21. Fitness. After recent attendance at the Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic held annually in Chicago, I was struck by the physical and mental vitality of the leading bandmasters, some of whom are very advanced in age. I can't think of a single leading conductor of bands who is a heavy smoker, heavy drinker, or who is obese. The reality seems to be just the opposite; most seem to be fitness fanatics. Just consider that Colonel (Retired) Arnald Gabriel still looks great in his uniform after many years and that Dr. Harry Begian can still inspire, motivate, and outhustle a roomful of young musicians. This may be a "chicken or egg" situation. Is it because successful band conducting requires physical vitality or is it that successful band conductors tend to have the discipline to be fit in all areas of their lives? Frankly, it doesn't really matter. For the Blue Collar Band Director, the lesson may be to emulate those who have been and are being successful and that seems to include good health habits.

22. Programming. I'm reluctant to even address this topic in a setting that's intended to be short and to the point because entire books could (and should) be written about programming. As a military band conductor and teacher of military band conductors, my mantra when it came to programming is that <u>every</u> musical performance must do three things in the following order: Inspire, Entertain, and Educate. After years of attending untold numbers of concerts by professional, university, community groups I think the same priorities are relevant to every musical organization. Our responsibility to the audience must remain uppermost and if we hope to be relevant in the future we must ensure that serving the audience remains our priority. First, our music must Inspire. If we do nothing to touch the listener emotionally or to convey an uplifting or reflective feeling, then we are technicians and not artists. Second, our music must Entertain. Maybe castor oil is good for a patient but they want it rarely and in small doses followed by something that tastes good. By the same token, perhaps some intellectually challenging but hard to listen to music is good for the audience but they deserve it in mercifully small doses. It is true that more sophisticated audiences may be entertained by more challenging music, but every audience appreciates a piece of great music with a nice melody, consonant harmony, and a catchy rhythm. Lastly, our music must Educate. As music educators we sometimes misinterpret this. While at times our performances may be vehicles to musically educate our audiences, there are other types of education, or to put it more properly communication that we should be including in our performances. For a university or community band, maybe the "education" is related to what makes their university or state or town great. Including that type of education/communication in our performances makes it clear to others that live music is a valuable tool for the larger organization and deserves their robust support.

When it comes to developing a successful program, always start with a realistic analysis of the audience and then steal shamelessly, examining how others have programmed successfully. Most experienced conductors develop their programs using a template that they probably stole from someone else. The following chart shows a template for a

one act concert that might be performed by a community band in the summertime (stolen from Colonel Eugene W. Allen).



23. The most important thing is to go back and re-read the introductory paragraph at the top of this rambling. A conductor must first, foremost, and always be a musician. However, the conductor is a musician who cannot make music and relies on others to make the music for him/her. If you keep that in mind, you will treat the musicians with dignity and they will reward you with music. This does not mean babying them. The music comes first and if they don't put it first, they deserve an appropriate reminder of why we are there. But – they are not there for us, so when you start to think you make beautiful music, just get over yourself. Best example of this I've ever seen is one of the great giants of band music, Dr. Harry Begian. Whether it's a beginning band or one of the top bands in the world, Dr. Begian's approach is always exactly the same. He wades right in and tries to make it better. Unlike some of the "old school" bandmasters, he is not a tyrant and does not abuse or degrade musicians. However……. if anyone shows a lack of respect and dedication for the music, for the ensemble, for the audience, or for him --- watch out. Without being cruel he can forcefully and unforgettably ensure the offender gets on track or makes the "walk of shame" out of the room. Few directors are as beloved by their protégés as Harry and few can get any band, regardless of ability, to sound better as quickly as him. That's all any of us can hope for.

- Tom Palmatier

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